

A Hollow Army In the 21st Century: Will History Repeat Itself?

by

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A HOLLOW ARMY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: WILL HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

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With the end of major military operations in Iraq in 2011, and in Afghanistan in 2014, the U.S. Army begins another transformative era. The challenge of maintaining a large standing Army without a comparable large scale mission, in an environment characterized by diminishing resources, compounded by global economic crisis, poses unprecedented challenges to our organization. We must find ways to retain the combat and operational experience of an Army that has been in combat for over a decade, while enabling a future force that remains the best trained, best equipped, best led, and most capable. The Army is the largest service and thus, through history, has been cut the most during post-conflict draw downs. What will be different in a post-Afghanistan Army? There are potential solutions to the problem set that we face today. Our Army's history is full of examples. The strategic environment today is very similar to the situations we faced following two World Wars, Korea, and the Cold War. In each of those situations, the Army force structure and budgets were reduced sharply following major combat commitments. The lessons learned in those eras can provide possible solutions or options relevant for tomorrow's Army.

A HOLLOW ARMY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: WILL HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

It is both possible and productive for firms to identify and prepare for a future that has already happened. Thus, although it is difficult for organizations to predict their future accurately, determining events that have already taken place allows them to know how to prepare for a future that has already happened.¹

—R. Duane Ireland and Michael A. Hitt

The second decade of the 21st Century promises to be a strategic challenge for our civilian and military organizational leaders. The fiscal challenges we face as a Nation, across all sectors, internally and externally, are the worst we have faced in a generation. Globalization, particularly in the economic and diplomatic arenas, also has led to strategic decisions that affect national security, foreign policy, and internal politics. The United States Army and the decisions that affect its end strength, force structure, equipping, and training strategies are all third and fourth order consequences of a revolution in Tunisia, a debt crisis in Greece, and nuclear deterrence or containment policies in the Middle East relevant to Iran. These events in time all have an influence in U.S. strategic decisions. The U.S. influence in the ongoing Arab Spring revolutions and the sovereign decisions Iran makes about nuclear weapons are limited; however, a financial implosion in Greece, the fiscal pressures the European Union, the rise of China as an economic power, and the price of oil have direct effects on our economic decisions, and thus resources.

The global economy affects our National Debt, economic growth, and resource priorities. Our Nation's priorities which affect the defense budget priorities, particularly in 2012 and beyond, will be constraining factors in all Army and Department of Defense (DoD) related strategic decisions. These priorities recently changed, reflecting a

renewed focus on global security and a “rebalancing” of military attention to the Asia Pacific region.² This shift in priorities has resulted in a corresponding shift in the strategic approach to the Nation’s defense posture, to include a greater reliance on the Joint Force 2020 and increased emphasis on the Air and Sea Domains. The Land Domain or Army, in particular, remains a vital part of the overall military strategic and operational approaches in the global environment. However, after its dominance on the battlefield in the last 12 years in growth, resourcing, and sustainment in two major operational theaters, the Army is going to get leaner. How the Army transforms itself in a post-conflict environment while remaining the best led, best trained, and best equipped Army in the world, will be the strategic challenge.

History provides a template for strategic leaders to view, in retrospect, potential pitfalls and solutions from the past. As a prominent four-star general reiterated to the U.S. Army War College class in 2011, during his presentation, he was very adamant that the civilian and military leaders understood the problem sets and had solutions that would preclude future “Task Force Smiths.”³ This is an obvious historical reference that leaders have used since the end of the Korean War that says “we will not have a hollow Army (military) again.” Strategic leaders have the responsibility to use all the tools at their disposal to guide the organization towards a workable solution defined by the environment and a strategic vision. At a minimum, “no more Task Force Smiths” should be a timely and relevant forethought. There are many potential solutions to the challenges the Army faces beyond 2012, and historical perspectives are key. This research project will look to the past to help shape the future Army. It will address the most important second and third order consequences of shaping the Army to meet

future challenges by learning from post-conflict transitions in the past and avoiding a hollow Army in the future.

Background

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, during a question and answer session with Marines in May, 2011, stated that “four times in the last century, after wars we have basically unilaterally disarmed ourselves. And then we have had to discover all over again that the world really isn’t a friendly place and that we always need to have our military capability to protect our interests.”⁴ Today’s military faces many of the same challenges as in past post-conflict time periods. Today’s strategic approaches to the environment are best defined by three documents: The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review; Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense; and The 2012 Army Posture Statement. The way ahead, as these strategic documents indicate, provides strategic direction and priorities in a fiscally challenged environment.

Contributing factors to our Nation’s strategic environment include national political elections in November 2012, fiscal and economic crisis around the globe, and the Nation’s premier military Land Component Force, the United States Army, at home stations after nearly 12 years of continuous combat operations, attempting to adjust to peace time operations and a garrison environment while remaining ready to deal with a range of potential future threats. The complexity of these situations and the results of related decisions and policy direction will have a profound and direct impact on the Nation and the Army.

As our leaders traverse the realities of tough choices—from prioritizing national interests to domestic sacred cows—the reality is, there has to be winners and losers.

The U.S. Army, historically, has been the organization that does yeoman's work defending our Nation in times of crisis and has been the branch of service that gives back the most in times of peace. The challenges we face today, as an institution, resemble other times during post-conflict transitions, most notably after World War I (WW I), World War II (WW II), Korea, and the Cold War. The strategic decisions that were made by our civilian and military leaders following each conflict had profound effects on military force structure, end strength, and readiness. And in each case, a hollow Army ensued as a direct consequence.

Today's strategic environment is similar in many ways to past post-conflict eras. Volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) might be 21st Century terms to describe the environment, but they are just as applicable to the 20th Century. Leaders from each of the previous eras described had their own wicked problems to solve. The historical trends, however, suggest that possible solutions and consequences of policy decisions were not fully vetted. Before examining these trends, it is important to understand common terms and context of the problems addressed in this paper. First, there is a difference between a hollow force during conscription or mobilization and the all volunteer Army. Second, we need a common understanding of the term "hollow" in relation to military requirements and capabilities. There are multiple ways to define what a hollow force is in terms of how the Army found itself postured in history. A hollow Army is not just the imbalance of force structure and manning; it is both structure and manning in relation to the Army's mission and resources. It is this imbalance that is clearly seen in our post-conflict Army over time.

Historical Example: WW I

Following World War I, strategic leaders developed a defense minded strategy. The “war to end all wars” and the mind set of political leaders to emphasize naval power over large ground forces caused “an almost continuous weakening from 1918 onward for a decade and a half.”⁵ Military strategic leaders voiced their concerns about the state of the military but were rebuffed by a cost conscious political system. General Pershing remarked in 1925 that “under our very eyes there have already been serious reductions made by congress and that the politician, himself often times uninformed as to his country’s history, frequently appeals to the ignorant and unthinking on the score of economy.”⁶ The state of the Army leading up to World War II could be characterized by a lack of personnel, obsolete equipment, and inadequate training—all the elements of a hollow Army.

The cost savings realized during the post WW I period did not amount to much realized gains to our National treasure considering the economic downturn caused by the Great Depression in the 1930s. Fiscal constraints during this time were real. Army equipment from 1918 to 1940 amounted to surplus material which was used and not replaced, and that was not only increasingly obsolescent, but increasingly ineffective owing to wear and age.⁷ The Army, in 1936, lacked airplanes, tanks, combat and scout cars, anti-aircraft artillery guns, searchlights, fire-control equipment, .50 caliber machine guns and other vital material.⁸ Even as late as 1940, with Nazi Germany already dominating the battlefields in Europe, an urgent Army request to Congress for 166 airplanes was beaten down to 57, and no 4-motor bombers were permitted.⁹

Although the 1920 National Defense Act authorized a 280,000 man active duty military, in 1930 there were only 136,000 on hand. The authorized force was thought to be large enough to provide a cadre that could be expanded rapidly if necessary; however, Congress and the President did not provide funding to match the strategy.¹⁰ In the years 1921, 1922, 1923, and 1925-1928, successive Secretaries of War told Congress that the present combat strength would be insufficient to fulfill the functions required by our national defense policy and further cuts would endanger safety.¹¹ In 1934, General Douglas MacArthur summarized the personnel shortages dramatically, declaring: "In many cases there is but one officer on duty with an entire battalion; this lack of officers (has) brought Regular Army training in the continental United States to a virtual standstill...correction is mandatory."¹² Despite these warnings, the Nation resourced an Army manned on paper and structure, but woefully under resourced to meet authorizations, leading to a hollow force.

The "defense only and peace at all costs" strategy held by the political and social environments after WW I was the main contributing factor to the pre-WW II hollow Army. The Army was not ready or able to respond to the Nation's call once the United States entered WW II without extensive ramp up time for personnel and equipment. Political leaders did not understand their external environment nor realize the shambles of their military's equipment readiness. The military leaders' attempts to warn their political leaders and the Nation fell on deaf ears. The consequences of not heeding those warnings would soon become evident.

America's first battle in World War II at Kasserine Pass, with its unprepared Army and outdated equipment, may have had a remarkably different outcome if our political

leaders had made different policy decisions in the transition years related to military readiness and National defense priorities. Kasserine Pass was a military fiasco on many levels, costing the lives of many Soldiers, credibility with our coalition partners, and the Army's confidence in its own ability to fight and win on the battlefield—confidence that did not fully return for some time. The Army adapted quickly once the Nation provided the direction and resources. WW II started ugly, but ended with spectacular results.

Historical Example: WW II

Following the end of hostilities in World War II, there was again a large demobilization of the military. The plans for demobilization were made in 1943 and executed beginning in 1946. In 1945 there were over 8 million military service members that were mobilized and served in WW II. Ten months after the war, there were 1.8 million. Much of the mobilization in WW II was from the Reserve structure. Millions in our military were activated Reserve and National Guard personnel. They were kept on orders only as long as was required and then demobilized. The remaining active duty formations and military personnel were mostly distributed throughout Europe and Japan for occupation duty. The demobilization plan was executed despite real concerns about Soviet expansion and stability operations in the former enemy countries, and the Army was hollowed out of active duty structure and personnel very quickly. The “leaders of the government were well aware, foreign policy and military policies were moving in opposite directions.”¹³ The lessons learned from World War I post conflict transition were not applied to World War II, apparently. Strategic leaders during this time believed a large standing Army would not be an effective instrument of national policy.

Deterrence and nuclear weapons were part of the equation to be sure. However, like America's first battle after World War I, in Kasserine Pass, the effects of misaligned strategic policies after World War II proved history would again repeat itself.

German and Japanese activities leading up to the beginning of WW II provided some indication to U.S. leaders that our Nation might become engaged in the conflict. The June 25, 1950, North Korean invasion of South Korea, on the other hand, did not provide the United States ample warning to set the conditions for war. The transition years between WW II and Korea led to a poor state of military readiness similar to that of the early 1940s. Policy direction in 1949-1950 led the Army to only minimally reduce combat units and to cut to the maximum the other "fat" in the table of organization and equipment. This amounted to a large reduction in support units critical in time of war.¹⁴ At the start of the war in Korea, all U.S. Army divisions were under strength. All of the available divisions to Eighth Army in 1950, for example, lacked fully manned third regiments, and each of the regiments, minus one in the 24th Division, lacked a fully manned third battalion. Further, none of the regiments conducting occupation duty prior to the North Korean invasion had their authorized tank companies. How did the U.S. Army, following a great victory less than 5 years earlier in WW II, fall into such disarray?

During the post-WW II conflict, the Army cut force structure and personnel. The Nation and its leaders believed the policy of nuclear deterrence could underwrite the need for large conventional forces. The rapid drawdown of military personnel and cuts to force structure left the Army a shell of its former self. Many battle tested veterans were demobilized. The Army during this period lacked depth. The Army's force structure policies that led to removing support units and whole tank companies from

regiments and divisions compounded the Army's challenges in depth and flexibility. The units and personnel that remained to defend American interests around the world were those organizations performing occupation duty in Japan and Europe. The forces in Japan that would be called upon in 1950 to deter North Korean aggression would soon realize the lack of suitable training areas prevented them from training above company level and from training with artillery or tanks. In the five years following the end of World War II, the political ends and the Nation's unwillingness to resource the Army led to a hollow force. The environment that ensued, leading to Korea, basically meant that our Army's four-star generals had transformed a mighty weapon into a light constabulary force on wheels, designed for occupation duty in Japan and Germany and not much more.¹⁵

The U.S. Eighth Army was charged to lead the efforts in Korea. Just three months prior to the invasion, they deactivated two corps' headquarters due to lack of ability to train above the battalion level. When 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment of the 24th Infantry Division, led by Lieutenant Colonel Charles B. Smith, dubbed "Task Force Smith," flowed into Korea from Japan, the other battalions in the regiment were required to give up personnel and equipment to Smith to allow him to deploy with what was required. Despite the addition of this equipment and personnel, Task Force Smith still had critical shortages. For example, Company K of Smith's battalion landed with two 81mm mortars (tubes and base plates) but lacked bipods and sights. TF Smith also had no organic vehicles in their weapons company and deployed a personally owned jeep belonging to one of the enlisted Soldiers in the company. There were only 13 anti-tank heat rounds in the entire division upon deployment.¹⁶ Undermanned, ill equipped,

and ill trained, the 24th Infantry Division, and due to the luck of being first in combat, Task Force Smith, allowed a third rate military power to drive our defenders down the Korean Peninsula and almost into the ocean before they managed to hold the Pusan perimeter.”¹⁷ “No more Task Force Smiths” has since become the catch phrase or forewarning to our military to not repeat the same errors that led to that terrible outcome in our Army’s history.

Historical Example: The Cold War

The next opportunity for U.S. strategic leaders to learn from the past came in 1992. The forces that participated in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm were the products of the military growth and modernization which began in 1981. The political and military strategic leaders during President Reagan’s tenure embarked on a strategy to build a top rate force to counter Soviet capabilities during the Cold War. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, the military was well manned, equipped, and trained. The outcome of the U.S.-led effort to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait was a spectacular victory for the U.S. and Coalition Forces.

The change in military force structure and readiness that occurred after Desert Storm and the Cold War should have been expected. The post conflict era of military readiness, whether 1991 or 1946 or 1919, provides historical references. The Soviet Union disbanded and the Cold War was over. Political leaders believed that the United States was the sole super power in the world and could afford to make large cuts in defense spending. These cuts to the military allowed our political leaders to reprioritize defense priorities to enact a “peace dividend” to be used for domestic priorities.

The budget constraints in DoD caused the Army to make significant force structure changes in the post Cold War era. In less than seven years, the Army went from 18 active duty divisions to 12 and then to 10.¹⁸ Matching the decrement in force structure, personnel downsizing that began after Desert Storm accounted for a 37% reduction, from a high of 769,700 in 1991 to 482,200 in 2000.¹⁹ While this is a significant number, what is more relevant is the method of the drawdown. In terms of personnel policy, the drawdown did not provide precision or forethought in many areas. The capabilities and capacity of the U.S. Army in a post Cold War era, according to our civilian leaders and Congress, did not require a large standing Army. As such, once the cutting began, it was swift, large, and wielded with all the precision of a shotgun.

The method to cut 37% of the force in the prescribed timeline was “across the board” cuts. This method was effective in downsizing the military quickly through various personnel and administrative tools. However, the effect on the force was detrimental and led to a hollowing of the force. For example, three voluntary separation programs—Voluntary Early Release and Retirement Program (VERRP), Voluntary Separation Incentive (VSI) and Early Retirement allowed a large number of officers to leave the service without taking into account past performance, experience, or service obligations.

The VERRP allowed lieutenants and captains to resign from the Army prior to fulfilling their service obligations. This meant that hundreds of young officers, many from the United States Military Academy, left the Army ranks after serving only a few years. Many had been platoon leaders or at least served in Desert Storm. At the same time, the Voluntary Retirement program allowed lieutenant colonels and colonels to retire at

their rank without the three year time in grade requirements. These incentives proved to be very strong and amounted to many officers separating from the Army in a relatively short time. Without senior lieutenants and captains in the battalions, many positions were filled with junior officers who should have been leading platoons. Those lieutenants and young captains that did stay found themselves working one and two levels up in battalions and brigades due to the shortage of captains and junior field grade majors. The loss of experienced lieutenant colonels and colonels to the voluntary retirement program left a gap in potential mentors to the young officers who found themselves over their heads initially.

Along with the voluntary separation programs, the Army also enlisted the use of involuntary separation programs to continue the drawdown. These programs included the Lieutenant Retention Boards, Selective Early Retirement Board (SERB) and a Reduction in Force (RIF). These programs contributed to across the board personnel cuts and included separation of over 700 lieutenants in FY 1991 alone.²⁰ The SERB also was an effective administrative tool used to cut large populations of officers. In FY 1992, 27.7% of eligible colonels and 25.4% of eligible lieutenant colonels were affected.²¹

During this latest post conflict military drawdown, the Clinton administration took a prolonged procurement holiday and cut the force to the razor-thin minimum needed to get by.²² The second and third order effects of this holiday greatly transformed the military industrial base. Many companies went out of business or were consumed by larger companies. The end product was a much less flexible and much less experienced industrial base to support future acquisitions. The lessons from history,

again, are relevant. If capability is lost, it takes time to build it back up when needed. Less than a decade after the post Cold War drawdown began, commercial airliners slammed into the Twin Towers in New York. A new war would begin, a Global War on Terrorism, and like in Kasserine Pass in 1942 and Korea in 1950, the U.S. Army would fight a war with force structure, equipment, and doctrine based on the last war. This is a trend that has not benefited the U.S. Army in the past. However, as the last combat units redeploy from Afghanistan in 2014, we can do better in the next Army transition.

Army 2020

In 2006, Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) General George Casey implemented studies to determine the global environment in 2020 and what that meant to the Army. He also commissioned a study that looked back to 1994 to determine what the environment was and what the Army was doing then in the midst of post-conflict transition.²³ This methodology should be the standard for all strategic leaders—understand the institution today, shape the organization for the future, and learn from the past. By most indications evident today, our Army is going through the assessment of the future force—Army 2020 and Joint Force 2020—by understanding the past.

In the next five years, 2012-2017, the United States military will undergo serious transformations and transitions as the current fight in Afghanistan draws to a close. The strategic challenges—shaping the force, readiness, fiscal constraints, and the next war— will provide strategic leaders ample opportunities to view decisions in retrospect and scan the road ahead. General Dempsey stated in February 2011 that leaders must have a deep understanding of our military history, including how we begin, conduct and end wars.²⁴ Strategic leaders provide vision. They align culture, values, and purpose to

achieve their strategic mission. The success of our armed forces, as an institution, relies on our leaders to get Army 2020 right.

From the strategic messaging ringing loudly in the internal environment, from the Secretary of Defense down the chain of command, one would surmise that our current leaders understand both the domestic and operational environments. Our leaders seem to understand the impact of reduced DOD/Department of the Army budgets and the impending downsizing and reduction of force in relation to the strategic complexity that exists in the environment.²⁵ They are working hard to posture the force to be ready, i.e. agile and adaptable. There are several plans and policy actions the Army has begun to implement or is on the slate to execute in the near future that provide solutions that avoid potential hollowing effects.

Assessments and Recommendations

Military downsizing is inevitable. And, as always, the enemy has a vote. The realities of tomorrow's military can be seen in strategic leader actions yesterday and today. The Army's plan to address current and future priorities, force structure, personnel, and equipping can be found in the Army Posture Statement published on February 17, 2012. This document informs Congress on the state of the Army and outlines the Army's priorities for Congress to consider when reviewing the President's budget for the following fiscal year.²⁶ It also ties the 2012 Strategic Priorities and the potential resource challenges into the Army's approach to 21st Century challenges. The ends, ways, and means are clearly addressed in this comprehensive document.

The Army Posture Statement also addresses the relevance of history in shaping and resourcing tomorrow's Army. The Posture Statement acknowledges that after

every major conflict, the Army has faced pressure to downsize. Further, whenever the Army was rushed to radically diminish the position of the Army, the results have always been the same: an excessive decline in effectiveness at a cost of blood and treasure.²⁷ The relevancy to history and desires to avoid the hollow Armies of the past have caused justified concern for our civil and military leaders, who now consider shaping and transforming tomorrow's Army to be an imperative.

Two approaches the Army Posture Statement addresses today that were not part of our previous post conflict draw downs are reversibility and expansibility. Both approaches address future capabilities and future threats in a complex and evolving environment. Reversibility means shaping tomorrow's force structure and end strength in a way that facilitates quickly building back up forces or adding new capabilities on a relatively short timeline.²⁸ Expansibility refers to how the Army shapes and manages the force to quickly regenerate capabilities and manage intellectual capital, rank structure, and other assets that could facilitate expanding the force to meet unforeseen threats.

Reversibility would have been important to the Army in the post World War I and II transition periods. Reversibility would also have played a large part of our Army's posture during the post Cold War era when we gave up capacity and experience freely, using across the board cuts in personnel. Reversibility provides the forethought to maintaining stronger manning percentages at the mid- and senior grade non-commissioned officer positions. Reversibility also calls for maintaining senior company grade and junior field grade percentages by specialty, something not done during the 1990s. Reversibility provides the Army the capacity to generate capabilities in a shorter

time, in the right structure, with the right equipment to best respond to potential future requirements. This regeneration capacity was not evident in previous post-conflict Armies.

Expansibility, as a concept strategy, has been part of our Army's core strategy for a long time. The National Guard and Army Reserves have been force multipliers since the first called up militia in the Revolutionary War. Only recently, with the formation of our All Volunteer Force, have the National Guard and Reserves played such a large role in the overall national defense strategy. The Guard's brigade combat teams and the Reserves' combat service and combat service support formations are integral to the total Army force. Before 911, the Guard and Reserves were the ready reserve, or the Nation's strategic reserve. Operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and countless other countries in the post-911 environment prove that the Active Component cannot accomplish the mission without Reserve and Guard formations at its side.

Key to both reversibility and expansibility is posturing the force with experienced leaders in the right rank to facilitate standing up or activating new formations as necessary. In particular, maintaining a cadre of our most experienced and capable non-commissioned officers (NCOs) will be essential to ensuring an ability to rapidly stand up and train new organizations. By actively and publicly striving to retain the very best leaders at all ranks, and particularly among the mid-grade officers and NCOs, the Army can posture itself to execute the dual strategies of reversibility and expansibility, demonstrating to allies and potential adversaries alike that although it is getting smaller, it retains the ability to rapidly reestablish additional combat power. The effort to synchronize and integrate both concepts becomes very important in tomorrow's force

through policy, force structure, and managing end strength. Reversibility and expansibility, however, also come with a cost, and these strategies currently are not completely resourced. Furthermore, there are other means to address capacity and capability solutions that help avoid the hollow Armies of the past.

One example of our leaders getting it right is the Profession of Arms (POA) Campaign introduced in December 2010 by General Martin Dempsey, then Commanding General of Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). The Profession of Arms Campaign recognizes the importance of purpose, culture and values in building and sustaining the institution. The campaign also emphasizes leader development and growing strategic leaders for the 21st Century and for Joint Force 2020. Effective leadership and adaptability are critical imperatives during the upcoming drawdown. Leadership and professionalism can mitigate some of the challenges the Army will face transitioning from 12 years of combat to peacetime operations in a garrison environment. The Profession of Arms Campaign asks Soldiers to recommit to a culture of service and the responsibilities and behaviors of our profession as articulated in the Army Ethic.²⁹ While ethics and values have always been a foundation in our professional Army, the Profession of Arms Campaign is out front and permeating the Army culture. This will lead to more and deeper integration into planning, policy, doctrine and training, further strengthening the Army profession. This is a different approach and an effective communication vehicle to help ensure Army leaders at all levels can stabilize the internal environment and enforce the Army culture and its norms. It is very evident that the Army is serious in fostering profession. It was no

accident that the Chief of Staff of the Army's guiding principles begin with Army values.³⁰

Another example of the Army's attempt to address the balance of capabilities and mission is human capital management. It is becoming increasingly evident that the Army's end strength will be significantly decreased over the next five years, and will likely be no higher than 490,000 by the end of FY 2017. Our force size will be leaner, thus the need to have the right type of force is critical. The bottom line to properly sizing and shaping the force is to avoid across the board cuts to personnel. This action had negative effects in every other post-conflict Army drawdown. The prevailing understanding based on recently published documents is that the Army will shape the force based on proven experience, performance, and potential. The Army will also shape the force by retaining more seasoned mid-grade non-commissioned officers and captains and majors—the building blocks of expansibility.

The Army recently changed its policy to give brigade level commanders, vice battalion level, the retention mission. This change should result in more effective implementation of drawdown programs. While there will be forced separations in some career fields and ranks, giving that authority to commanders closer to the formations is good policy. Non-voluntary separations like reductions in force (RIF) boards or retirement separations are not necessarily bad policies, but the Army must be careful to avoid mass separations. The Army has five years to shape the future force to Army 2020. In that time, through reduced accessions, normal attrition, and local commander policy execution, 490,000 is achievable without the draconian measures of the 1990s.

Another example that the Army has partially addressed in relation to rebalancing and shaping the force is the role of female Soldiers. Recently, the Army lifted the Co-Location Policy that prevented female Soldiers from being assigned in units that co-locate near or with combat units. Women are barred from serving in combat formations below the brigade level. The Co-location Policy in a non-linear battlefield in Iraq and Afghanistan simply did not make sense. The Army was late in recommending this policy be rescinded. Understanding the battlefield environment and the administrative loop holes in assignment policies, i.e. assigning female Soldiers to forward support units that collocate in support of combat infantry battalions effectively does not violate policy, but it does violate the intent of the policy. Commanders know this. Commanders however, have missions to accomplish with all available resources and the collocation policy had just enough gray area to not box them into ethical dilemmas. The Army could do more and better.

While the Army has resolved the Co-location Policy issue, it needs to address another restrictive policy affecting female Soldiers. The Ground Combat Exclusion Policy, rescinded by Congress in the 1994 Defense Authorization Act, remains a matter of DoD Policy.³¹ This policy restricts female Soldiers from serving in direct combat roles. After 12 years of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, female Soldiers have proven their mettle, often serving alongside their male counterparts, in direct ground combat as situations arose that required it. In so doing, these female Soldiers have earned their share of valor awards and Purple Heart Medals, and many paid the ultimate sacrifice. All Soldiers regardless of sex are trained to the same standard battle tasks. All Soldiers today, and most likely in future battlefields, will have equal exposure to dangers inherent

of combat. Not every female Soldier wants to be an infantryman, but those that do should have an equal opportunity to serve in that capacity. The time is right to be bold and open up combat arms career fields to increase the Army talent pool. Other western nations have made the leap to allow females to serve in all specialties and fields. Doing so for U.S. Army female Soldiers can be a positive step to shaping, recruiting, and retaining the best Soldiers, regardless of gender.

The Army is also addressing force structure as it moves forward towards Army 2020. What is not known today, however, is what capabilities the Army needs to build for the future. The end strength will dictate a personnel cap, but what that means to the number of BCTs, division headquarters, and support units is the key to building force structure. The Army is still assessing the number of BCTs required by type--infantry, Stryker, and heavy. Recently, the Army announced a plan to align BCTs by region to give the combatant commanders known capabilities. This appears to be a well thought out plan. It will give BCTs a regional focus and facilitate tailored training. Another force structure issue being worked is adding a third battalion to heavy BCTs. The idea is sound, but in a zero sum and resource constrained environment the additional battalions will, by necessity, come out of existing force structure. This may not be a wise course of action to pursue. A third battalion in heavy BCTs would necessarily cause force planners to address doctrine, training, equipping, manning, and sustainment. The cost of cutting additional BCTs to pay for this build would directly affect strategic flexibility. There is a big difference in providing 37 BCTs worth of capability versus 32 or fewer that would be available if the third battalions were to be fielded.

The Total Force Policies and HR 2020 Department of the Army initiatives to synchronize all components of the Total Force will be effective in shaping capacity and capabilities during the drawdown. More importantly, however, Total Force policies are integral in shaping the future force—Joint Force 2020.³² While the Total Force Policy and HR 2020 are not yet published, they demonstrate a strategic vision and leadership initiative in force planning that was not evident in previous U.S. Army post conflict transitions. These initiatives, once executed, will fundamentally change the Army in a positive way and provide direction and strategic guidance that benefits posture in terms of doctrine, training, equipping, and manning.

Is the Army postured for the possible future when and if the consequences of the Senatorial sequester cuts an additional \$500 billion from DoD? The current military leadership aims to prioritize resources and mitigate risk in the post transition phase of the drawdown to endure short-term turmoil. The phased drawdown in five years time is feasible. An additional nearly \$500 billion in cuts in the next ten years, however, would have momentarily poor effects for the Army and national security. The Army could not execute the additional cuts without becoming a hollow force. The goal, obviously, is not to let this happen. However, the military will execute the mission assigned by its civilian leaders. In this regard, political dimensions of decision making in an election year may not be an advantage to the military.

Conclusion

The ghosts of “the hollow Armies” of the past are ever present in today’s thinking. This is a good indicator that today’s strategic leaders are striving to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. The relevance of history in planning the post-Afghanistan Army

has thus far proven to be an important factor. This would indicate that historical lessons learned have been integrated into strategy. It would also be a sign that today, unlike the 1920s, 1940s, and 1990s, the military institutions will adapt and avoid past mistakes. This would also mean that the next war, whenever and whatever it might be, will not invoke memories of a hollow military force—“no more Task Force Smiths.” The future is not yet written. The strategies and policies that will shape today’s and tomorrow’s Army are slowly becoming evident.

The Army is on a good glide path in planning and resourcing the future force and developing capabilities that will be required in the 21st Century. However, this process is fraught with risk; aside from the potential additional \$500 billion cuts in defense in FY 2013, there is the challenge of an unknown enemy. Whether the enemy is a nation state or non-state actor, tomorrow’s Army needs to be ready, capable, and credible to best support Joint Force 2020 to endure and win in any environment. The planners after WW I, WW II, and the Cold War had similar aspirations, but made flawed decisions with fateful results. Army leaders must continue the transformation to a leaner force and implement strategy and policy that efficiently and effectively shapes the Army for victory. Army 2020 will not be shaped overnight. Given the limited time Congress has allocated the military to meet its end strength targets, recapitalize its equipment, and grow the leaders of the future, Army leaders need to remain adaptable and maintain readiness. DoD priorities, Army planning, and historical perspective demonstrate a strategic approach that can and will avoid a hollow Army.

Endnotes

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⁸ Charles E. Hellar and William A. Stofft, *America's First Battles 1776-1965* (Cambridge, Houghton Mifflin Company, Riverside Press, 1967), 227.

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